

Presentation Tips from Presentation Coach Sylvie Verleye

Collection of my most valuable tips after 5 years of blogging and writing on the topic



One summer day I was having an informal meeting with Nicole, she is one of the people who receives my monthly presentation tip. To my surprise she told me that she saves these tips in a separate folder on her computer, named 'Sylvie', as they are so valuable to her.

Of course it made me smile and I told her that just the other day someone had reacted on my last tip that it was just the advice she needed right then as she was preparing a presentation for the next day. Nicole gave me the idea to make a 'collection book' of all the tips I had written so far. As I just loved the idea I starting working on it right away and this e-book is the result.

I have decided to start this book with the last tip I wrote and work back to the very first one I ever wrote. As I have written on some subject several times I have added a list of the most important topics and the pages where you find my ideas. Most of the tips come from my monthly presentation letter though I have added some extra tips from my blog as well.

Should you be interested to receive more information just mail me on Sylvie@sylvieverleye.be

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvie". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end of the word.

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Jun 13

Mix data and narrative

Recently I received this great article (thank you Peter) showing a TED movie where a 12 year old Masai boy named Richard Turere presents. The heading of the article was 'How to give a killer presentation'. It is Chris Anderson himself, the TED curator, who coached this boy and convinced him to present. Richard had invented this ingenious system to protect their livestock from lion attacks. Chris Anderson was so moved by this story that he wanted him to talk on TED though there was this one problem...**Richard was a painfully shy boy and his English not the best.** When you see him on stage you can only say 'whaaaw, the guts he has'. On the basis of this experience Chris Anderson is convinced that giving a good talk is highly coachable and so do I!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAoo--SeUIk>

He was coached to 'frame' his story and find the perfect mix of data and narrative. My advice is this: the bigger the audience and the longer your talk, the more you need to tell them stories. And the easiest stories to share are real examples from your experience!

May 13

The 5 minute presentation

A few weeks ago I had a training for a new customer. Some 3 weeks before the training I received a mail asking me if it was ok to let the training start at 10 o'clock. Apparently the Director General wanted my presence in the 9 o'clock meeting so that I could explain to the other directors what my focus would be for the presentation training. No problem for me.

So they asked me to do a 20 minute presentation followed by a Q&A and urged me to send the slides upfront. I replied that I would be happy to do the presentation though suggested to **limit it to a 5 minute talk followed by their questions. And I would send the notes afterwards.**

And so I did! Of course the meeting did not start at 9 o'clock sharp. After some introductions I did my 5 minute talk and answered all their questions. They did not even need notes afterwards. My preparation time? Only the 5 minute talk!

Don't automatically think that a presentation needs to be a 20 minute presentation. Keep your monologues short and keep their attention!

Apr 13

Present your answer first

I just read this article on **board presentations** that I really like. I read the obvious stuff like to be prepared who is in your audience and focus on numbers but there is this one tip that I think is very important and we don't do this enough: **Present your answer first!!** This is how they explain it:

'We solve problems by defining them, generating solutions, designing decision criteria, choosing the best alternative, and creating a plan. But this isn't the way to lead the board through your thinking. Tell them the answer and then back it up. Too many presentations dwell on how the problem was solved.'

This corresponds completely with my advice to **structure your presentation around your conclusions**. Limit your conclusions ideally to 2 or 3 (these are your key messages), Give your first conclusion and back it up, then give your next one and back it up. And when you present to the board, **please keep it short!**

Ma 13

Present without using slides?...

I have waited a long time for this moment...proudly I announce that I have coached someone to do a **presentation without using slides!** I did not plan to do this though. I had coached this person to do a presentation for an audience of 150 people. During the first dry run he used slides and I noticed that they did not provide added value to, his content and more important that he kept, on looking to the screen instead of the audience.

This was a presentation of maximum 10 minutes and I asked him how he would feel to do this presentation without slides. He agreed immediately and we looked how, he could **interact more with the audience instead.** The second dry run was far better and moreover...

I just received feedback from the event and **his presentation appeared to be in the top 3 of most appreciated presentations!!** He just sent me a mail that he was very nervous before the presentation though it went fine during his talk as he did not have to worry about slides or beamer or technical stuff. It was just him and his audience. Do you have the courage to be such a 'naked presenter' for your next short talk?...

Feb 13

'conversational' language

Yesterday I was coaching someone to speak on a big event. I asked him to think of an **introduction** for his presentation based on input that I gave him and it struck me that he started writing down immediately. I then asked him to 'present' his introduction to me and as I had expected it was all long sentences and very much written language that actually sounded odd.

I then asked him to do the exercise again though this time I wanted him to **imagine** that he would **present to friends** and before writing anything down I asked him to speak out aloud and then write down whenever it sounded right. He did his exercise again and now it sounded so much more natural.

So please, if you want to write down, **first talk aloud** and it does help to think how you would say it to friends because then you are your natural self, and **then write down** exactly the way you said it. Don't do this for your whole presentation though but I do recommend it for your introduction especially if you are not that experienced.

Jan 13

The rule of 3 as a structure

For this first presentation tip of the year I gladly refer to a TED movie that I loved watching recently. There are a couple of reasons why you should see Ric Elias talking on TED:

- superb **structure of the speech** using the simple **rule of 3**
- he **sets the scene with a story** from his very first sentence
- with small **personal comments** he adds **humor** to his talk
- simplicity in 'just talking' to his audience for **5 minutes**
- slightly **moving his body to left and right** to cover the whole audience

Though the main reason I sent this is because of the message itself which I think is a great one to begin this new year! Enjoy Ric Elias on www.ted.com or watch him on youtube on <http://simplytalking.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=678ea3a272732765b00c4a63a&id=9748e7c79b&e=e0731b0420>

Dec 12

Short monologues, longer dialogues

What is it about **consultants and these very detailed PowerPoint presentations?** I have seen many presentations by now with data dump but consultants are 'king of details'... Their answer is that their customers expect that. Now my question is 'do they really?'

I have talked about this problem with lots of people who listen to presentations daily. What they expect is clarity during the presentation and the whole detailed report as a handout!

My advice for you is this: your presentation consists of 2 different parts, you **start with a short clear presentation structured around your answers**. And yes you may use VISUAL slides to support this. And **afterwards** you have a **discussion with your audience** answering whatever issues there are left. And yes, you can use your detailed report to answer these questions.

Nov 12

Earn the attention of your audience

...this is what a participant told me last Friday during a training. It was his conclusion on the tips and tricks I had just given and in fact he's right. Getting the attention of the audience is not something that happens just like that. **If you want attention of the audience, you have to give it to the audience yourself!** Give them your full attention,

look at them, **go as close to them as you possibly can**, be and feel one with them. And the best way to do that is to make sure you have no slides to begin your presentation. Let the audience focus on you so you can focus on them. No distractions, just you and your story. Experiment with it...

Oct 12

Imagine you talk to friends

Last Wednesday I attended the book launch of 'No-nonsense' written by Michel De Coster. I have interviewed him a couple of years ago regarding presentations and I still remember one anecdote he shared with me. This guy had to give a presentation for Michel in his office and of course the speaker had made a PowerPoint to present it. The guy had printed out 2 copies of his PowerPoint and when he planned to start his presentation turning to slide 1 this is what Michel De Coster did...he took the document from the speaker and said 'you know what, just talk to me'...

This is exactly what Michel did during his book launch. He **'just' talked to the audience** and I loved it. In my opinion this is what you should do when you present. Of course you need to be prepared though imagine during your preparation that you will be talking to friends. You will be amazed how much more natural you will be. And why not check it out if it could work for you to 'just' talk **without PowerPoint...**

Sep 12

‘Feel’ the words you speak

I just did a half hour telephone coaching with someone who has to do a presentation for a very big audience and what I realized once again is that when you want to feel good in front of an audience you need to be ‘authentic’. Now what does that mean in presentations?

In preparing a presentation ‘feeling your words’ is crucial. I have coached some beginning news presenters and very often the first time when they read from an autocue I just can’t feel what they say. They pronounce everything right but it is as though they don’t hear what they say themselves. The more I coach them to ‘feel’ the words they say, the better they read from the autocue.

And that is exactly so for presenters. It begins with your ‘good morning’ or ‘good afternoon’. Really welcome your audience, welcome them in a smiling way. Don’t make your welcome sound as the obligated first sentence. Feel it when you say it. Whenever you can smile in a presentation, please do that. You don’t have to smile throughout the presentation though. Being authentic means being honest. My main message for you in this post is **TO FEEL YOUR WORDS** when you speak them in a presentation. For **it is the only way to stress the right words and to show enthusiasm.**

Jun 12

Real leaders don't do PowerPoint...

I just read this book by Christopher Witt and while reading I felt indeed I have found another soul mate when it comes to presentations. The book is '**Real leaders don't do PowerPoint**' and I absolutely want to share with you the text I have marked in the book:

- # The first rule of public speaking is this: **You are a walking talking message**. It is not about your PowerPoint.
- # Your audience doesn't care what you know until it knows that you care. One of the best ways to do that is to tell them **stories in a conversational way**.
- # **Stop caring about the way the audience thinks about you**, don't stop caring about them though. The actress Ashley Judd says to herself before going on stage 'what other people think of me is none of my business'.
- # **Divide your presentation in chunks, preferably no more than 3**, and talk about each chunk for about 5 minutes.
- # The audience understands less when they have to look and listen at the same time than they do if they can simply **listen or look** at one time.
- # Bridge the divide between your audience and you, and you must make the first move to reach out. **Take the stage and come close, look at them and pause**.
- # Move your body and your mind will begin moving again too when you are lost in your presentation.

This book is mainly for speakers who have to address large audiences and who need to inspire the audience. Highly recommended as far as I am concerned.

Restructure your company 'talk'

This month's presentation tip is all about the **company presentation** and my plea to please change it!

Nearly every company presentation has the same outline: it starts with a slide about history, followed by a mission statement or vision. Then it continues with locations worldwide (if it is an international company) to end with products or services.

In my last interview with Eric Gryson, CEO of Ricoh, we discussed about this company presentation. He said that he used to do exactly the same kind of presentation because you are proud of your company and you want to share impressive figures. And this information may indeed be important for the customer but not necessarily upfront in the presentation.

My tip for you is to **rethink the company presentation and make a list of your USPs**. Don't limit yourself, this list can be exhaustive. **Every USP should be 1 slide**. These are the core slides of your presentation. You can elaborate on every USP in slides that follow the core USP slide, however don't think you need to put every detail on your slide. Please make a difference between what you show during the presentation and notes (or brochure) that you give afterwards because this is ideally your detailed information.

You don't need to present all the USPs, choose the ones that you think are most important for the prospect. And if you present this for just 2 or 3 people please **talk to them without slides**. Talk with them, ask questions, give the information they need through question and answer and **focus during your presentation on the USPs, you have to know them by heart!** It is only for a larger audience that you absolutely need slides...

Feb 12

Speak up even with a microphone

Yesterday I gave a presentation in Amsterdam for about 100 people. I had a microphone, of course, but even then it is extremely important for me to use my voice. **You're on a stage so you have to own that stage.** Not just when you are in front of 100 people but for a small group of just 3 people as well.

Sometimes I hear people speaking in this very **monotonous voice**. I will never give them as feedback, you should have more intonation. I will advise them to **speak LOUDER**. Because when you speak loud, automatically the range of your voice will be different. And it sounds much more confident. On top of that it is extremely important to **FEEL what you say because only then you can stress words**. So when it feels very unnatural for you to speak louder, just speak out the important words in a louder voice and it can make a huge difference.

I often ask people to do 'the extreme volume exercise' in front of the group. This is the kind of exercise where I ask them to tell a story or to read something but with a volume that for them feels too loud. And then I ask the audience how the volume was for them. For the participant who did the exercise very often it feels like shouting. For the audience it sounds very normal and they even often say that the participant can raise that volume even higher. So own the stage next time you present and raise your volume!

Jan 12

What is your 'neutral position'?

Every speaker has a 'neutral'. **it is this position that you have in front of a group when you are NOT speaking.** You can compare it with a car. You have to put it in gear to drive but to change to a different gear you will pass that neutral position. And this is for most speakers very difficult as you don't know what to do with your hands. My advice for you? Watch the professionals and steal with your eyes. **You can learn from people presenting the weather on television.** They hold a remote control but watch carefully how they hold it. **Their arms are not stuck to their body but something like a 90° position.** This is a very professional neutral position.

Watch TED presentations on www.ted.com. There is a particular one I would like to draw your attention to and it is the presentation of Garr Reynolds for TED Japan. This is the link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g8T8MsFlp0>. It is interesting to look at it as he has contact with his audience from the very beginning. Though specifically, watch his neutral position as he has a remote control as well. He uses his hands while he is speaking but comes back to that neutral in between sentences. Watch, steal and try it yourself...

Nov 11

The 10 20 30 rule

This is a rule that I love by Guy Kawasaki. He is a venture capitalist who listens to pitches day in, day out and he is fed up with these detailed slides.

His advice for a good presentation is the 10 20 30 rule : **maximum 10 slides** (I like that number because you need to memorize the order of your slides), **speak maximum 20 minutes** (and even shorter if possible), and use a **font** (letter size) on your slides **of minimal 30** (this is important for your VISUAL slides during the presentation, not for the report PowerPoint)!!

Oct 11

Movement may help to connect

Last Wednesday I gave a training and one of the participants struggled with his eye contact. In his first exercise he looked at only 1 or 2 people in the audience and the rest was 'neglected' (which very often happens by the way). In his second exercise I asked him to lean against a table so he did not have to worry about how he 'stood' in front of the audience. And I asked him to focus on eye contact and to look at everyone without saying anything. Again this was very difficult for him and he kept on focussing on some people. He mainly looked at me, probably because I was the one filming him...

In the next exercise we did not focus on eye contact anymore. It was all about how to introduce your topic in an interesting way and this time that same participant chose to walk around. He came very close to the audience, he moved from one side to another...and automatically his eye contact followed and he actually looked at everyone in a very natural way. So in fact, **the closer you come to the audience, the easier it is to have REAL contact** with the audience and the easier it will be to grab their attention.

Sep 11

Memorize your first sentence

I was talking to some lawyers yesterday and was interested to learn that a good lawyer knows the first sentences of his plea by heart. This is exactly my advice for your presentation. **I don't learn my presentation by heart but I do know what my first sentences will be.** For the rest I rely on the preparation I have done.

I know my structure and I know the order of my slides. This gives me the confidence that I am on top of it. So please be an excellent lawyer and learn your first sentences. Before I go on stage I focus very much on the structure of the presentation, the big parts, but some 2 minutes before I actually go on stage I focus very much on these first sentences.

Jun 11

Where is your focus before speaking

This morning I heard something great on the radio. Two women were interviewed who were training to be in the next winter olympics in 2010, with the for us fairly unknown discipline bobsleighbing. Their current top speed was 130 km per hour. The interviewer asked whether they were ever scared racing at this high speed. One of the girls answered *'just before the race I am scared but once I'm in that sleigh I just don't have the time to be afraid, I have to focus'*.

Take this advice and use it for your presentations as well. **One of the reasons why you are nervous is because you think.** Right before a big presentation I make sure I have something to DO: **I focus on my breathing.** Doing this actually prevents me from thinking and worrying what might go wrong. In fact anything will work just make sure you don't have time to worry and do something actively!

May 11

The changing presentation business

Is the speaking business changing? This is the interesting questions I just discovered on the internet. Three top speakers and presentation coaches were interviewed : Jim Endicott, Julie Terberg and Nancy Duarte. All three of them known in the States as giants in the field of creating effective and compelling presentations. Nancy Duarte and her team designed the slides for Oscar winning 'An Inconvenient Truth' of Al Gore. I have summarized what intrigued me most and that is this : there is hope for boring presentations! Why?

Well, first of all, these past few months they have experienced that more and more **people are willing to use more visual slides instead of bullets or text slides**. People they have coached experience, as I have experienced with people I have coached, that it is so much more fun to present with these simple slides. You feel free and not forced at all to use all these words on the slide. I mainly recommend these type of slides for big audiences.

Apr 11

A simple structure provides clarity

Last Friday I went to an interesting event for speakers. I listened to 3 presentations, all of them experienced speakers. On my way home I thought of these presentations and I specifically thought of what I remembered from them. Because ultimately this is the effect you want with a presentation, that the audience remembers your main message. And it

struck me that it was not that easy for me to remember what they had said... although I clearly remembered the third presentation. How come ?

All three of them spoke with enthusiasm, they all had a great eye contact, they all used examples and anecdotes, they all came close to the audience. Two of them had used a PowerPoint and the slides that they had shown were just excellent. But **only one of the speakers had clarity and used an easy to follow structure** in the presentation and in the end...it made all the difference to me... So for your next presentation: use a simple structure built around your key messages!

Ma 11

Text on cluttered background?

For some external presentations it can be interesting to work with real visuals (images). **The best result is when you make the visual as big as the slide!** However, when you want to add a message to that visual you are often limited because of the colors of the visual as you have to be aware of contrasts. The following link that was sent to me gives you an idea how to solve this! <http://bit.ly/ppt-tip-3>

Feb 11

PREZI

Let me draw your attention to a whole new presentation tool 'prezi'. It works very different from PowerPoint that is very linear having slide after slide. Prezi works with a canvas where you put all the information on the canvas. You can put text, pictures, videos... as big or small as you want. Actually **it works like a mind map**. You can put the whole map on the canvas and **zoom into the elements you want to show**.

That having said, zooming is the biggest pitfall of Prezi. **If you zoom too much in and out you leave your audience completely seasick**. On the other hand there are people who started using prezi and never ever want to use PowerPoint again. If you'd like to give it a try surf to www.prezi.com You can make an account for free and start experimenting!

Or as they say in prezi language 'happy zooming'...

Jan 11

Do you really need PPT?

Yesterday I spoke with two professors of Ehsal who told me that they too used PowerPoint every day when teaching at university. One of them told me this however: *'a while ago there was a technical problem and I could not use the PowerPoint I had prepared. I think it was one of my best lectures. I was not looking at a screen because there was nothing to see. I really spoke to my students and they listened to me and it was just great...'*

Dec 10

Feel 'one' with your audience

Believe it or not, the easiest thing you can do when confronting an audience is **to stand as close to them as possible**. It might sound frightening but just try it out.... Every audience has an energy and most of the time they are really positive and want you to succeed. Use that positive energy, and feel one with them. It is not you and your audience, **try to find an 'us' when you present**. This is wonderfully demonstrated by Benjamin Zandler. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LCwI5iErE>

Nov 10

Rehearse aloud!

Today I heard it yet again: these awful minimizing sentences such as 'today I am going to talk to you a little bit about' or 'I will try to explain to you today'. What do you think about 'Maybe I will go to the next slide now' ... and it goes on and on. It is not only the uncertain speakers who use these sentences, it is like a presentation habit. Beware of language like that! It literally minimizes your presentation.

You can avoid this by **rehearsing aloud!** Ban all hesitant words and be conscious of the language you use.

Oct 10

Use metaphors to make it memorable

I had the pleasure to see Jef Staes presenting this week! What a speaker... But what strikes me most is this: he sinned against so many 'presentation rules' and still managed to leave a lasting impression. He sat down, something I would never recommend. He didn't have the most exciting start using even hesitant words. But he did one thing that was extremely strong: **his whole speech was one long metaphor** (comparison he made with sheep in all its forms) and I'm sure everyone in the audience still remembers what his core messages were. So far for presentation techniques...

Sep 10

Avoid hesitant words!

It's fun to pay attention to the first sentence of speakers. Countless the times that you will hear 'I am going to talk to you today about...' There are many variations to this first sentence and - I'm sorry to say - women will often say 'I am going to talk to you **a little bit** about...' It is an awful sentence to begin a presentation as this even minimizes your talk from the very beginning. **Be careful about minimizing words as they kill the strength of a presentation!**

Be prepared for questions

'Presenting to Win' written by Jerry Weissman is one of the first books I ever read on presentation skills and I recommend it to every speaker. As I value his advice I will share with you his idea on the top 10 myths about handling tough questions in this June column.

Myth 1: Make a list of potential tough questions and prepare an answer for each

Solution: Prepare a short list of key issues, and an equally short position statement for each. Bullets rather than sentences; concepts rather than script.

Myth 2: If someone asks a question about a subject you've covered, refer back to the slide.

***Solution:* State your answer ... without the slide ... as if you never covered it, and do it succinctly. Due to the rapid-fire dynamics of Q&A sessions, you must never look back. Keep moving forward.**

Myth 3: Compliment your questioner by saying, "That was a good question," or "I'm glad you asked that."

Solution: Make no value judgments or characterizations of *any* question. Simply respond to the central issue in the question.

Myth 4: You don't have to answer irrelevant questions.

Solution: If they ask it, you will answer it.

Myth 5: Use every question as an opportunity to deliver your message.

This is only a partial myth. You can and should use every opportunity to deliver your own message, but only *after* you have earned the right to do so by first providing an answer to the question you were asked. Politicians characteristically perpetuate this myth by ignoring the question and launching into their own message. Politicians are expected to do this. You cannot.

Solution: Provide an answer for every question; only then can you swing for the seats.

Myth 6: If you don't know the answer, try to buy time and make an attempt to answer.

Solution: Say you don't know, but promise to get the answer to your questioner later. Be proactive. Ask for a business card. Of course, if the question is about a subject that is central to your story, you cannot plead ignorance or you will appear evasive. In this case, be sure you are prepared, as in the solution for Myth 1.

Myth 7: If you get a multiple question you must answer all the questions.

Solution: Pick only one question, respond, and then turn to the questioner and say, "You had another question." They will either re-state their question or say, "That's okay, you answered it." Either way, you are off the hook. Handle one question at a time.

Myth 8: Repeat the question so that everyone can hear it. If the question is challenging, such as "Why is your product so expensive?" and you repeat it by saying, "Why is our product so expensive?" you would then be admitting that your product is expensive.

Solution: Strip out the value judgment by paraphrasing, "How did we arrive at the price?" If the question is "What makes you think you can survive in a crowded market dominated by larger players?" strip out the value judgment, "How do we compete?"

Myth 9: If a question addresses a confidential matter, say, "I'm not at liberty to answer.

Solution: Attribute the confidentiality to a position outside your purview, e.g., legal, security, or corporate policy. For example, "Our legal counsel has advised us to withhold comment," or "Our company policy is to not make forward-looking statements."

Myth 10: Answer the question you want to answer.

Solution: If they ask it, you will answer it, even if you are guilty as charged. However, once you have answered, you can shift gears to the positive and state your message.

For instance, take the question above, "What makes you think you can survive in a crowded market dominated by larger players?" Your effective response can be, "You're right; we are a small player in a crowded market dominated by larger players. But because we are a pure play, we can focus all our attention on our target sector and, because we are small, we are more agile and can rapidly shift to meet changes in the market. Therefore, I am confident that we can not only compete, but win."

May 10

Eye connection instead of eye contact

For this May column I share a presentation tip with you from presentation coach Olivia Mitchell. Her advice is to **use conversational language** and as I completely agree with her I will explain what it means.

Language you use daily in conversations is what we're most used to listening to. We find it much easier to stay focused on somebody who's talking in a conversational tone. Listening to somebody using a lecture tone is very tiring. Though how can you be conversational in a presentation?

If you write a script, say what you want to **say out loud** and then write it down. That way what you write will be conversational in tone. However, it's better not to write a script at all. Write keywords and phrases which will remind you of what you want to say.

When you're delivering your presentation, **look at someone and talk as if you were talking just to them**. Talk to them for a few seconds (not so long that they'll be intimidated) and then 'pingpong' to someone else. Olivia calls this **eye connection**. Use eye connection rather than eye contact and you'll be more conversational!

Apr 10

Be Posture Conscious

I just read this article by Anne Hunt where she gives the advice to be posture conscious. She gave the example of standing in line at the grocery store. She was tired and felt a little run-down. She consciously straightened her spine, rolled her shoulders back, stretched her neck a little, and then relaxed in her new, “chin-up” position.

I want to ask you to be posture conscious especially before you go on stage and the very first minutes as these are the most nervous moments. If you feel like holding something in your hand to feel more comfortable you can though it has to be something useful. It has no use at all to hold a pen!

It is useful to hold a remote control or to hold a small paper or a microphone.

Experiment with it, exercise in front of a mirror, ask feedback. Watch people who are experienced how they hold it. Watch people who present on television how they do that. The only difference between a real stage and a presentation in front of a camera is that you make much **bigger gestures in front of a live audience**. Movements come from your shoulder, not your wrist, nor your elbow as this would seem too timid...

Ma 10

The girl who silenced the world

My presentation tip for March is a bit of a surprise even for me. Someone sent me the link to this amazing video '**the girl who silenced the world for 5 minutes**'. It is a 12 year old girl who gives an amazing speech standing behind a lectern and practically reading her notes. Before seeing this video I thought it was impossible to be convincing and to show **passion standing behind a lectern**. This video made me change my mind. **You can be passionate by clearly choosing the right words and speaking them with great tone, volume and intonation**. This is a youtube movie of rather poor quality but even then it is great to have a look at! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjXlbV0XY90>

Feb 10

Pecha Kucha

My February column is all about this presentation style **pecha kucha** and the question whether this could be the solution for the 'report' presentations we are now so used to.

Some 2 years ago I learned what pecha kucha was all about, a presentation style containing a **fixed number of 20 slides, these slides can only contain images and the slides change every 20 seconds**. This reduces every presentation to some 6 minutes and 40 seconds. To be honest I was not thrilled by this presentation style because I do believe in text in a presentation as well, especially key messages. However, if I have to choose between a 'report presentation' containing 37 slides and pecha kucha I would know what to choose...

Jan 10

Know your last sentence

Last week I gave a morning presentation session on my book for UBA. 20 interested people listening to what I had learned from interviewing women in top positions. I was so enthusiastic and they were such a great audience that I even gave more advice on how to structure a presentation. How to begin, how to structure the middle and I deliberately did not give any ideas on how to end to make them curious. No surprise when someone asked me during the Q&A what my advice is on how to end a presentation.

I told them about the 3 parts: **summarize or come to a conclusion, Q&A, and the last important part is to know what your last (strong) sentence will be AFTER the Q&A to end it completely** without having to say 'Thank you for your attention'. When I gave this information I suddenly realized that I had not thought of an ending for the presentation I was giving. And as I had given them information on how to end it I had to walk my talk...

One of the things you can do is refer back to the very beginning to actually make the circle round. For this presentation I had been introduced and people knew that I had become an independent trainer in 2000. So my last sentences AFTER the questions was this 'When I made the decision to become an independent trainer I had no idea what an adventure it would become. But I can only say it was the best decision I ever made and I can only hope that this book will help you for your next presentations...'

I made the circle round alright but what I did not expect is that I became all emotional in saying these words. I had to fight against my tears and could barely speak the words which made me realize yet again. You'd better be prepared and know exactly how to end it so you won't get surprises...

Dec 09

INTRO

For this last column of the year I give you some ideas how you can start your presentation. These are the first (maximum) 2 minutes of your presentation. You can use the letters of **INTRO**:

- I **Interest:** create the context of your presentation. Works great by using an anecdote!
- N **Need:** What is the objective of your presentation and what's in it for the audience
- T **Timing:** it can be interesting to mention the timing of your presentation
- R **Rules:** you can inform them about questions, can they interrupt you or is there a Q&A at the end
- O **OFF:** I urge you to use NO slides in your intro so they would listen to you without distractions

The letters do not have to be used in this order and do not have to be used all. It all depends on the kind of presentation you give. For a big audience you need to start with the I, for a small audience you could even start with the N. T and R can be left out. O for me is key!

Nov 09

Keep it short for the board...

I had a very interesting meeting with a CEO of a multinational and asked him the following question: 'what do you expect from managers who give a presentation to you or other members of the board of directors? And this is what he said: *I expect them to be crystal clear. I often received complicated files before coming to the presentation and therefore I need*

clarity during the presentation. I don't want to think, I need them to make the difference during that presentation. In order to be clear I expect a thread, I expect anecdotes, and if they think they will have 20 minutes to explain that they are mistaken. They get 5 to 10 minutes!

Oct 09

Pour them a glass of wine

The basis for me to get a message across is to **connect with the audience**. So many speakers seem to forget that a presentation is all about the audience. This means you have to LOOK at the audience. **The closer you are, the better you succeed in looking at them and having REAL contact**. How do you do that?

Look at one person as though you would pour that person a glass of wine and then look at someone else, and someone else (this is the advice I heard in a training from Speaking Circles and I love it...). Look at every person with that same intention and it will force you to REALLY LOOK.

However, you will have to 'pingpong' from one person to another. Don't go from one person to the next one as a lighthouse would do. Instead turn with your whole body from one side to another, to the front. Or even walk from one side to another, to the front. **Avoid at all cost...DISTANCE !**

Sep 09

ACT confident

I met with the HR Manager of Pepsico today. At the end of the meeting she told me this: *'My professional career actually changed once I started to give presentations. It gives confidence and increases your self esteem.'*

I have experienced this myself. However, don't you ever think that you won't be nervous anymore! The difference is that you know how to deal with this nerves; What really helps me is to act confident even though I feel nervous. Acting confident means coming close to the audience (to show that you are not afraid), stand in a conscious way (to show that you feel in control) and look at them (to show again that I am not afraid).

Just try this out, check out how confident speakers stand. How do they hold their arms, how do they look? Imitate, integrate and find your personal style!

Jun 09

Movies in PPT

This last column before the summer break focuses on how to use **videos in PowerPoint**. I see more and more people using that, e.g. you tube movies, and it really works...However, I know lots of people who struggle how to put it in a PowerPoint. I'm sure there are lots of ways to do this but I will just share with you how I do it (and believe me, if I can do it, anyone can...)

STEP 1 : install the free (safe) program www.youtubedownload.com

STEP 2 : Go to the youtube movie and copie the url (above)

STEP 3: go to youtubedownload and paste the link where it is clearly indicated, save it on your computer

STEP 4 : In your PowerPoint select the slide where you want the movie and go to 'insert – movies from file'.

STEP 5: click on the movie you have copied and select 'video options – play' You have the choice here to make the video play 'on click' or automatically when you click to the slide. I prefer the latter. BEWARE! You have to know the order of your slides if you chose the option to play automatically!

Should you have any problems, just send me a mail at Sylvie@sylvieverleye.be In the meantime I wish you the greatest summer and I'll be back in September with new tips and tricks !

May 09

Show enthusiasm!

The quote you are about to read is not mine but from Doug Stanart. He is an American presentation trainer and I very much agree with the post I read on his blog. And as I couldn't have said it in a nicer way...here is my advice for you in this May presentation tip:

'If you take only one piece of advice about public speaking, make sure that it is this pearl of wisdom. If you focus on this one simple thing, the number of times you say "uhm" won't matter. If you focus on this one thing, your gestures and not knowing what to do with your hands won't matter. If you focus on this one thing, then the occasional loss of train of thought won't matter. In fact, if you focus on this one simple thing, you can break just about every rule that public speakers are supposed to abide by, and you will still win over your audience.'

This one simple rule has transformed countless mediocre speakers into good speakers, scores of good speakers into great speakers, and numerous great speakers into world-class speakers.

This simple rule that can make or break a speaker is... ENTHUSIASM.

That's right, if you have a little excitement in your talk and a spring in your step, people pay attention. Your audience will have just about as much excitement about your talk as you do, and no more. So, if you want to win over your audience, add a sparkle of enthusiasm.

One of my mentors told me that there are two rules to live by in the world of professional speakers. She said, "Rule number one is to never speak on a topic that

you yourself are not enthusiastic about, and rule number two is that if you ever violate rule number one, fake it 'til you make it.'

Apr 09

Advice from one great speaker!

For this column I have taken an extract from the interview I did with Tanuja Randery as research for my book on presentation skills. The book is ready by the way and will be published September 21st !

'... It's always in my mind the best presentations are where you bring a certain content expertise to the table. Because then your passions and your beliefs in that topic come through. And then it's almost like you can never fail. What I rely on in a presentation is content, examples - **I use a lot of examples** - punchy meaning short, **2 or 3 points**, not more than that. And then really - I said it before - **passion, belief and energy**. To me there is more of that than you need than even content at the end of the day...'

Ma 09

The power of examples

This column will be very short. I simply invite you to have a look at the presentation of Elizabeth Gilbert.

It is a **superb example of authenticity in presentations**, and the fabulous advantage of using personal examples, the advantage of using pauses and you will notice that humor can be very natural in a presentation just by sharing stories to make your point ! Enjoy it! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86x-u-tz0MA>

Feb 09

Ask for feedback

There is a topic I have never mentioned before and that is **stage fright** ! This is not an easy topic to cover as it is so very different for everyone and there are so many different degrees of stage fright.

A first tip I give you though is one I have experienced myself... Present as much as you can AND **ask constructive feedback** (if possible) to someone you know and trust in the audience. That means things you have done well in your presentation and things that you can improve. We are all very hard on ourselves and often what the audience sees is very different to what you feel...

If you don't have the opportunity to present that much in your current job but you would like to do that, just **join Toastmasters**. These clubs exist with just one purpose, make you a better speaker. There is a new club that starts just this Tuesday in Ghent ! If you want to know more about Toastmasters you can have a look at the site www.toastmasters.com or just mail me for more information. Last month I was a guest in a club in Brussels and it really works !

Jan 09

The power of pauses

Let's have a look this time at a great presenter, Steve Jobs. There are many reasons why he is an excellent presenter though in this mail I will just pay attention to one element !

When you look at this example it gives you a **great example of how strong pauses can be**. Never rush in a presentation, use pauses. Especially before you are going to say something important and right after you have said it. Use a pause and the importance of your message will be that much stronger...

In my presentations for example I say *'My first message for you is this...(pause)...say the message...(pause)...*And then I continue and explain what the message means.

Watch this example of Steve Jobs, it is the introduction of his IPod.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZoPdBh8KUs>

Dec 08

Learn with Toastmasters

I'm a huge fan of Toastmasters as it can really help you become a better presenter in a safe environment. If you are curious what a toastmaster meeting might look like just watch this presentation of Kristi Currey. She has this **interesting talk how she dealt with her stage fright**. I love the **pauses**, I love her **conversational style**, I love her

anecdotes.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Y9yIvIaRe4g

When you go to toastmasters for the first time you are a guest and nothing is expected from you. When you actually join you start with what they call 'an icebreaker', this is a max 3 minute presentation where you present yourself. You don't present in every meeting though and the choice is always yours. You get feedback on every aspect of the presentation and people who give feedback even get feedback on how they did it!

Nov 08

Presentation ZEN

Let's talk PowerPoint this time. When you hear me talk about PowerPoint (some of you have...) it might sound as if I am at war with PowerPoint but believe me I am not. It's just that I have seen so very few good PowerPoint presentations. Everyone uses them but even the one who created the program, Robert Gaskins, is not happy with what he sees. In 2007 PowerPoint celebrated its 20th birthday and Gaskins said he had an ambivalent feeling. Everything is put into that PowerPoint and that is not the way it was intended.

So, **my ambitious goal is to change the PowerPoint culture in companies.** Why ? To make you talk to your audience again and not to the screen. To make sure the audience is focused on what you have to say and does not read what is on the screen. How to do that ? Simplicity in slides. A great book on this topic is written by my 'gurru' **Garr Reynolds** '**Presentation Zen**', a MUST READ book for everyone who uses slides!

Oct 08

Big audiences, big visuals

Last month I saw a presentation by the CEO of Mobistar. I must say that in the 9 years I am into this topic I had never seen a presenter who impressed me....until I saw that presentation. I was especially impressed by his PowerPoint which was ALL PICTURES. I congratulated him after his presentation and asked him whether he always used these kind of slides. His answer? ALWAYS! Please follow his example and surprise your audience...

A slide is first and foremost visual in the true sense of the word! **Visual means that you use images or simple graphics.** I can assure you, you will have full attention of the audience. No distractions of words whatsoever. Why are images so strong? Because our world consists of images and our minds are stored with pictures. When I ask you for a childhood memory it is a picture that will pop up in your mind. It is so much easier for your audience to remember a visual and the message attached to that, than a slide with lots of text or even 'a simple text slide with bullets'. Make it easy and memorable for your audience! I mainly recommend this for big audiences, not for your 'in company' presentations...

Watch Terri Sjodin on PowerPoint:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKv_s6WMc1U&feature=related

Prepare on paper, not PPT

As a presentation Coach I am very interested to see how some messages are forgotten right away and others 'stick' in your mind. It's the 'sticky' ones that deserve all our attention and are worth a closer study how you can make sure that your messages 'stick' as well ! Every month you will receive a mail with just one simple tip on presentations. This mail will be accompanied with a link to a movie (e.g. something from you tube) that illustrates my point.

a presentation is all about key messages ! **Next time you have to do a presentation, don't open your PowerPoint program right away. Just think what your key messages are, ideally focus on three.** This is something you can do sitting in the car (in traffic jam you have lots of time to think), Doing that is a first step to solving the PowerPoint problem in companies that is very recognizable if you watch Don McMillan's 'How not to use PowerPoint'. I know this is poor youtube quality though I'm sure you will laugh, as you will recognize it... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yUBIaamI0Q>